

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

REPORT

CD

Czechoslovakia

Reception of Western Broadcasts

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

1. About 40% of the families in Czechoslovakia own a radio capable of receiving several broadcasting stations; of this number some 80% are capable of receiving VOA and BBC programs. There is a constant increase in the number of radios capable of receiving foreign broadcasts. Radios comprise one of the few consumer goods which can be obtained relatively easily. As the Czechs have no confidence in the stability of their currency, they try to convert it into available goods of any kind. Radios are, therefore, one of the items frequently purchased even if not urgently needed. The Czechoslovak market is exclusively supplied by sets of the Tesla make, which are domestically produced. All the radios are of a uniform type and the price depends on the number of tubes; it varies from three thousand to nine thousand Kcs. Each owner of a receiving set is required to register the set at the Post Office and obtain a concession for listening. The charge is 25 Kcs per month and is collected automatically by the postman. Receiver repair parts are available, but their quality is inferior. For instance, a new tube would last only two or three months.

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2. Listening to foreign broadcasts had not been prohibited [redacted]
[redacted] If, however, a person was known to be following foreign broadcasts, this fact would have an influence on his political reputation and would naturally affect his career. Good Communists are not expected to listen to Western broadcasts, therefore, everyone who was known to listen was classified as a reactionary element. Those who listened, and practically everyone did, did so in the privacy of their own homes. Public places, such as restaurants and workers' clubs, were forbidden to tune in Western stations.

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3. Jamming of foreign broadcasts was directed mainly against RFE. The VOA, BBC, Paris, Belgrade, and Rome broadcasts were not jammed with such intensity, and many times it was possible to hear entire programs. It seemed to me that jamming was general; it was not directed against only certain parts of the program. The quality of reception was often influenced by atmospherics and the geographical location of the receiving set (as a rule, Prague and other large towns had poorer reception, probably because of the proximity of jamming stations). If atmospherics are favorable, parts of even the most jammed RFE broadcast can be heard.
4. [] wired radio installations were placed at all military establishments. Loudspeakers were located in all classrooms, bedrooms, offices, corridors, and canteens. Tuning was performed by political section personnel at a tuning center. The listener had no choice of program. This wired radio installation was used for local broadcasts on various occasions, eg, addresses on memorable days and other propaganda speeches. The loudspeaker could be switched off.

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